



Digital innovations in humanitarian action: opportunities and challenges

Credits	2 credits ECTS
Dates	17 - 28 October 2022
Format	Online (combination of self-study time and live sessions) All live sessions are in group and mandatory - Usually in early afternoon, Central European Time
Prerequisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online course requires 20-25 hours of dedicated work per week. We recommend that participants allow at least 50% of their time for the course and adapt their professional activity accordingly.• Broadband/high speed connection - 2.5 Mbps minimum.• Please note that most weekly content and activities is accessible via phone, but a PC/laptop/tablet is preferred• microphone and webcam
Language	English
Fees	CHF 1'700
Course director	Dr Valerie Gorin – valerie.gorin@unige.ch



Course overview

Short description

Since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, enthusiasm over the potential of digital innovations and new technologies to improve humanitarian assistance has dominated the aid sector. While it shows the prevalence of technological determinism and data revolution among aid actors, the relation of humanitarian assistance to innovations is not unprecedented. The growing involvement of tech companies in global philanthropy has only accelerated this “innovation turn”. From crowd-sourced data used to create crisis mapping to the expansion of drones to facilitate relief distribution, humanitarian innovations capture a large diversity of digital and technological creations meant to improve the efficiency of humanitarian assistance during disasters, conflicts and migration. Exploring the entanglements between neoliberal actors, innovation labs, “tech for good”, data management and humanitarian governance allows questioning the opportunities and challenges of such innovations beyond the “tech utopia”.

Objectives of the course

At the end of the course, you will be able to:

- to understand the past and current relation of the aid sector with technical and technological innovations.
- to assess the main ideologies that inform the innovation turn in the aid sector and the entanglements between humanitarian governance and tech philanthropy.
- to question data extraction, management, and protection by humanitarian organisations.
- to differentiate potential uses and sectors for digital innovations, from health to information, translation, logistics, cash and voucher assistance.
- to critically examine sociopolitical, ethical and technological challenges and limitations of such innovations.
- to discuss cooperation and collaboration with the private sector and the humanitarian innovations labs where objects and techniques are conceived and implemented.



Workload

Around 20-25 hours of work each week, including:

- Asynchronous self-study activities (such as case studies, videos, recorded slideshows, readings, etc.)
- Synchronous live sessions

Structure of the course

- Rethinking innovation in the aid sector: historical and socio-anthropological perspectives
- Technological determinism and global philanthropy
- Ethics and challenges of innovations, data management and protection
- Sector 1: Digital technologies for healthcare and people on the move
- Sector 2: New information technologies for risk communication
- Sector 3: Drones and humanitarian assistance
- Sector 4: Blockchains and bitcoins in humanitarian programmes

Audience

- Professionals in the humanitarian, development or social sector looking to develop their competencies in using digital innovations and new technologies
- Professionals from other sectors (donor agency, healthcare workers, communication and media, interpretation and translation, tech startups, engineering, logistics) who wish to increase their understanding of digital innovations in humanitarian contexts
- Graduate students with relevant volunteer or intern experience, looking to undertake a postgraduate course with a view to entering the humanitarian sector.